

Guidance Services and Academic Stress Management of Undergraduate Students of University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom state

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between guidance services (information service, orientation service, and counselling service) and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. Three specific purposes, three research questions, and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 4,427 year-three undergraduate students of the University of Uyo during the 2025/2026 academic session. A sample size of 543 year-three undergraduate students was selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Guidance Services and Academic Stress Management Questionnaire (GSASMQ)" developed by the researchers. The instrument was face-validated by three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha statistic, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82. Data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. The findings revealed that information service had a strong positive significant relationship with academic stress management ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.05$) and orientation service had a moderate positive significant relationship with academic stress

management ($r = 0.57, p < 0.05$), while counselling service had a very strong positive significant relationship with academic stress management ($r = 0.88, p < 0.05$). Based on the findings, it was concluded that guidance services play significant roles in enhancing academic stress management among undergraduate students. It was recommended, among others, that the management of the University of Uyo should strengthen information services by ensuring that students have regular access to accurate and timely academic, social, and career-related information that can help reduce uncertainty and academic stress.

Keywords: guidance services, information, orientation, counselling, academic, stress management

Introduction

Undergraduate students in universities are exposed to various academic demands that require continuous adaptation, concentration, and effective coping strategies. These demands may include assignments, examinations, projects, deadlines, and social expectations within the university environment. As a result, many students experience academic stress, which may affect their academic performance, emotional wellbeing, and overall adjustment to university life. Academic stress management therefore becomes essential for students to function effectively and achieve academic success. Academic stress management refers to the ability of students to cope effectively with academic pressures, challenges, and demands in a manner that promotes psychological wellbeing and academic achievement (Ukaegbu & Ekpenyong, 2025). Academic stress management involves the use of appropriate coping strategies and support systems to reduce tension, anxiety, and frustration associated with academic activities. Similarly, Salami (2019) noted that academic stress management includes behavioural and emotional efforts directed towards controlling stressful academic situations. Poor management of academic stress among undergraduate students may result in anxiety, poor academic performance, emotional instability, absenteeism, and even withdrawal from academic activities.

One important factor that may influence academic stress management among undergraduate students is guidance services. According to Ukaegbu (2022), guidance services are organised assistance programmes designed to help students understand themselves, make appropriate decisions, solve problems, and adjust effectively to educational and social environments. In the context of this study,

guidance services refer to the professional services provided to undergraduate students to help them cope with academic, personal, and social challenges within the university environment. According to Akinade (2016), guidance services assist students in acquiring useful information, developing self-understanding, and making effective decisions concerning their academic and personal lives. Guidance services consist of several components such as appraisal service, placement service, information service, orientation service, counselling service, and follow-up/evaluation service. However, this study focused on information service, orientation service, and counselling service.

Information service refers to the process of providing students with relevant and accurate educational, vocational, personal, and social information that may help them make informed decisions and adjust effectively to school life as posited by Ukaegbu (2022). Information service helps students gain knowledge about available opportunities, institutional rules, academic programmes, and coping strategies for educational challenges. In the university environment, information service may assist undergraduate students in understanding academic requirements, examination regulations, course registration procedures, and available support systems. Access to adequate information may reduce uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety among students, thereby enhancing their ability to manage academic stress effectively.

Orientation service, on the other hand, refers to the assistance given to newly admitted or returning students to help them become familiar with the university environment, rules, facilities, academic expectations, and available services (Egbo, 2017). Orientation services enable students to adjust quickly to new educational settings and promote confidence and emotional stability. Orientation services may be important for undergraduate students because transition into university life often comes with unfamiliar experiences, academic pressure, and social adjustment challenges. Through orientation programmes, students may learn effective study habits, time management skills, examination techniques, and stress coping strategies. This may help students reduce fear, confusion, and anxiety associated with university life and improve their academic stress management.

According to Eremie and Jackson (2020), counselling service refers to the professional assistance provided to students to help them understand themselves, solve problems, make appropriate decisions, and adjust positively to their environment. Counselling services involve face-to-face interaction between a trained counsellor and a client with the aim of resolving educational, vocational, emotional, or social difficulties. Counselling services may be essential for undergraduate students because many students experience stress arising from

academic workload, financial difficulties, peer pressure, relationship issues, and career uncertainty. Professional counselling may help students identify the sources of their stress, develop coping skills, build self-confidence, and maintain emotional balance. Students who utilise counselling services may therefore be better equipped to manage academic stress effectively and achieve improved academic outcomes.

However, there is a need to investigate how these guidance services relate specifically to academic stress management among undergraduate students. Despite the availability of guidance services in many universities, students still experience high levels of academic stress, emotional instability, and poor coping strategies. It is against this background that this study investigated the relationship between guidance services (information, orientation, and counselling services) and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

Statement of the Problem

Academic stress among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo has become a major concern due to increasing reports of anxiety, depression, poor academic performance, examination pressure, and emotional instability among students. Undergraduate students are expected to cope with academic demands such as continuous assessments, assignments, examinations, and project work, yet many students experience difficulties managing these pressures effectively.

Despite the importance of guidance services in helping students cope with academic challenges, many undergraduate students still appear unable to manage academic stress adequately. This may manifest in poor concentration, examination malpractice, absenteeism, frustration, low academic achievement, and emotional imbalance. Although some studies have investigated guidance services and students' adjustment, there is limited empirical evidence on how specific guidance services such as information service, orientation service, and counselling service relate to academic stress management among undergraduate students, particularly at the University of Uyo. This gap in knowledge necessitated the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate guidance services and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. Specifically, the study sought to determine the following:

- i. The relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students.

- ii. The relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students.
- iii. The relationship between counselling services and academic stress management of undergraduate students.

Significance of the Study

Undergraduate students will benefit from the findings of the study by gaining awareness of how guidance services can help them cope effectively with academic stress and improve their academic performance. Counsellors will benefit from the findings of the study by gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between guidance services and academic stress management, which may assist them in developing appropriate intervention programmes for students experiencing academic difficulties.

University administrators will find the outcome of this study useful in improving the provision of guidance services within the university system in order to promote students' emotional wellbeing and academic success. Educational policymakers will benefit from the findings of the study by formulating policies that support effective guidance and counselling programmes in higher institutions. The study will also contribute to existing literature and serve as a reference material for future researchers interested in guidance services and academic stress management among university students

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students?
- ii. What is the relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students?
- iii. What is the relationship between counselling services and academic stress management of undergraduate students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

- i. There is no significant relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students.

- ii. There is no significant relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between counselling services and academic stress management of undergraduate students.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on guidance services and academic stress management of undergraduate students. Information service, orientation service, and counselling service served as the independent variables, while academic stress management served as the dependent variable. The study was delimited to third-year undergraduate students of the University of Uyo, Uyo, in the Faculties of Education, Management Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Theoretical Framework

Person-Centred Theory by Carl Rogers (1951)

The Person-Centred Theory was developed by Carl Rogers in 1951. The theory is one of the major humanistic theories in psychology and counselling, emphasising the uniqueness, worth, and potential of every individual. Rogers believed that human beings naturally strive toward growth, self-fulfilment, and positive adjustment when they are provided with a supportive and understanding environment. The theory emphasises the importance of creating conditions that encourage individuals to freely express their feelings, thoughts, fears, and experiences without fear of criticism or rejection. According to Rogers, individuals are more likely to develop healthy personalities and solve personal problems effectively when they are treated with acceptance, empathy, and genuineness.

Rogers explained that every individual possesses an innate tendency toward self-actualisation, which refers to the natural desire to grow, improve, and realise one's full potential. However, this growth process may be hindered by stressful experiences, negative social conditions, criticism, or lack of emotional support. The theory therefore stresses the need for supportive interpersonal relationships that promote understanding and emotional security. Rogers identified three major conditions necessary for personal growth and adjustment, namely unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence. Unconditional positive regard refers to accepting individuals without judging or condemning them regardless of their weaknesses or mistakes. Empathy involves the ability to genuinely understand another person's feelings and experiences from their own perspective, while

congruence refers to sincerity, openness, and genuineness in interpersonal relationships.

According to the theory, counselling relationships provide individuals with opportunities to explore their problems, understand their emotions, and discover appropriate solutions to life challenges. Rogers maintained that when individuals feel understood and accepted, they become more self-aware, emotionally stable, confident, and capable of making positive decisions. Through counselling interactions, individuals may learn to manage stress, improve self-esteem, and develop healthier coping strategies. The theory also explains that effective counselling promotes emotional adjustment by helping individuals identify the sources of their problems and encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and decisions.

The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how counselling services may help undergraduate students manage academic stress effectively. Undergraduate students often encounter academic pressures, emotional difficulties, financial challenges, and adjustment problems within the university environment. Through counselling services based on the principles of empathy, acceptance, and support, students may develop confidence, emotional stability, and effective coping strategies for handling academic stress. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding the role of guidance services, particularly counselling services, in promoting academic stress management among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

The Stress and Coping Theory was developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman in 1984. The theory explains how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to stressful situations in their environment. Lazarus and Folkman viewed stress as a psychological and emotional reaction that occurs when individuals believe that the demands placed upon them exceed their available resources or ability to cope effectively. The theory emphasises that stress does not arise solely from external events or situations, but rather from the individual's interpretation and evaluation of such situations. In other words, the way individuals think about and assess stressful events determines the intensity of stress they experience.

According to the theory, individuals first engage in what is known as 'cognitive appraisal' when faced with a stressful situation. Cognitive appraisal refers to the mental process through which individuals evaluate whether a situation is threatening, challenging, harmful, or manageable. Lazarus and Folkman identified two major stages of appraisal, namely primary appraisal and secondary appraisal.

Primary appraisal involves determining whether an event or situation poses a threat, challenge, or harm to the individual's wellbeing. For instance, a student may perceive continuous assignments, examinations, or academic workload as stressful and threatening to academic success. Secondary appraisal, on the other hand, involves evaluating the available resources, abilities, and support systems needed to manage the stressful situation. At this stage, individuals assess whether they possess adequate coping skills, emotional strength, social support, or guidance to handle the stress effectively.

The theory further explains that coping strategies are the behavioural and psychological efforts individuals use to manage stressful situations. Lazarus and Folkman categorised coping strategies into two major types, namely problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves efforts directed toward solving or reducing the source of stress. Examples include time management, seeking academic guidance, gathering useful information, and developing study plans. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, involves efforts aimed at controlling emotional reactions to stressful situations. This may include seeking emotional support, counselling, relaxation techniques, and positive thinking. The effectiveness of these coping strategies determines the extent to which individuals can manage stress and maintain psychological stability.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its explanation of how guidance services may assist undergraduate students in managing academic stress effectively. Undergraduate students are constantly exposed to stressful academic demands such as assignments, examinations, project work, financial pressures, and adjustment to university life. Information service may help students obtain relevant academic and personal information that reduces uncertainty and anxiety. Orientation service may help students understand the university environment, academic expectations, and available support systems, thereby improving adjustment. Counselling services may provide emotional support and coping strategies that enable students to manage stress effectively. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how guidance services can enhance academic stress management among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between guidance services (information service, orientation service, and counselling service) and academic stress management among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. According to Nworgu (2015), a correlational research design is

used to establish relationships among variables as they naturally occur. This design was therefore considered suitable for investigating how guidance services relate to academic stress management among undergraduate students of the University of Uyo.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 4,427 year three undergraduate students at the University of Uyo during the 2025/2026 academic session. The students were distributed across the various faculties and departments within the university (Academic Planning Unit, University of Uyo, 2026).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of 543 undergraduate students drawn from a population of 4,427 undergraduate students at the University of Uyo. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite populations. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents. The population was first stratified based on three faculties, after which the sample was proportionately distributed according to the size of each faculty. Thereafter, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from three departments in each of the three faculties selected for the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Guidance Services and Academic Stress Management Questionnaire (GSASMQ)" developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely Section A and Section B. Section A consisted of 15 items, with five items designed to measure each of the independent sub-variables of guidance services (information service, orientation service, and counselling service), while Section B consisted of 15 items which measured academic stress management. The items were structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, comprising two experts in guidance and counselling and one expert in measurement and evaluation, all from the Faculty of Education. The experts examined the instrument for clarity, relevance, appropriateness of language, and adequacy in measuring the variables under study. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final

version of the instrument to ensure that it adequately measured guidance services and academic stress management of undergraduate students.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using the internal consistency method. The instrument was administered to 30-year-old third-year undergraduate students who were part of the population of the study but were not included in the sample. The data obtained were analysed using the Cronbach's Alpha statistic. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.81 for information service, 0.79 for orientation service, 0.83 for counselling service, and 0.85 for academic stress management, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82. With these values, the use of the instrument for the study was justified.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers used a direct administration method in collecting data for the study. Permission was obtained from the relevant university authorities before administering the questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in their respective faculties and departments. The purpose of the study was explained to the students, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, after which the completed copies were collected immediately. Out of the 392 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 387 were correctly completed and returned, while 5 copies were not returned. The 387 returned copies were used for the analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. The correlation coefficients (r-values) were used to answer all the research questions by determining the strength and direction of the relationship between guidance services variables and academic stress management. The null hypotheses were tested using the associated p-values of the correlation coefficients at the 0.05 level of significance. All data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Decision Rule

For the research questions, the value of Pearson's (r) was interpreted as follows:

±0.10 - ±0.39 Weak relationship

±0.40 - ±0.59 Moderate relationship

±0.60 - ±0.79 Strong relationship
±0.80 - ±1.00 Very strong relationship

More so, if the value of significant value is less than the .05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significance was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld and vice versa.

Results

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of the relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students of University of Uyo (n = 543)

Variables	n	r	p-value	Remark
Information Service	543	0.75	.000	Strong + relationship; Significant.
Academic Stress Management	543			

The result presented in Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. The findings reveal a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.75 with a p-value of 0.000 at a sample size of 543. This indicates a strong positive relationship between information service and academic stress management. The p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, which means that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be inferred that an increase in the provision and utilisation of information services is associated with a corresponding improvement in academic stress management among undergraduate students. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between information service and academic stress management is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of the relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students of University of Uyo (n = 543)

Variables	n	r	p-value	Remark
Orientation Service	543	0.57	.004	Moderate + relationship; Significant.
Academic Stress Management	543			

The result presented in Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. The findings reveal

a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.57 with a p -value of 0.004 at a sample size of 543. This indicates a moderate positive relationship between orientation service and academic stress management. The p -value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, which means that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be inferred that an increase in effective orientation service is associated with a corresponding improvement in academic stress management among undergraduate students. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between orientation service and academic stress management is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of the relationship between counselling service and academic stress management of undergraduate students of University of Uyo (n = 543)

Variables	n	r	p-value	Remark
Counselling Service	543	0.88	.001	Very Strong + relationship; Significant.
Academic Stress Management	543			

The result presented in Table 3 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between counselling services and academic stress management of undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. The findings reveal a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.88 with a p -value of 0.001 at a sample size of 543. This indicates a very strong positive relationship between counselling services and academic stress management. The p -value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, which means that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be inferred that an increase in effective counselling services is associated with a corresponding improvement in academic stress management among undergraduate students. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between counselling services and academic stress management is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of data on the relationship between information service and academic stress management of undergraduate students revealed that information service relates to academic stress management to a high extent. In addition, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that information service has a significant relationship with academic stress management. This suggests that access to relevant and adequate academic, social, and personal information plays an important role in helping undergraduate students manage academic stress effectively. Information

service enables students to understand academic requirements, examination procedures, course registration processes, and available support systems within the university environment. Students who are adequately informed are more likely to experience reduced anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty regarding academic activities, thereby improving their ability to cope with academic stress. This finding is consistent with the study of Adebayo (2022), who found that information service significantly enhances students' academic adjustment and stress management. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Brown (2020), who argued that information service alone may not significantly influence academic stress management without adequate emotional and social support systems.

The analysis of data on the relationship between orientation service and academic stress management of undergraduate students revealed that orientation service relates to academic stress management to a moderate extent. In addition, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that orientation service has a significant relationship with academic stress management. This suggests that orientation programmes provided to undergraduate students play an important role in helping them adjust to university life and manage academic stress effectively. Orientation service exposes students to the rules, facilities, academic expectations, and support services available within the university environment. Through orientation programmes, students may develop better understanding of effective study habits, time management, examination procedures, and coping strategies necessary for successful academic adjustment. Students who participate actively in orientation programmes are therefore more likely to feel confident, emotionally stable, and prepared to cope with academic demands. This finding is consistent with the study of Okafor (2021), who found that orientation service significantly improves students' adjustment and academic coping abilities. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Wilson (2019), who argued that orientation programmes alone may not adequately reduce academic stress unless accompanied by continuous counselling and mentoring services.

The analysis of data on the relationship between counselling services and academic stress management of undergraduate students revealed that counselling services relate to academic stress management to a very high extent. In addition, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that counselling services have a significant relationship with academic stress management. This suggests that professional counselling assistance plays a crucial role in helping undergraduate students cope with academic stress and emotional challenges within the university environment. Counselling services provide students with opportunities to discuss

their academic, emotional, financial, and personal problems with trained counsellors who guide them toward appropriate coping strategies and solutions. Students who utilise counselling services are more likely to develop emotional stability, self-confidence, positive coping skills, and effective stress management techniques. This finding is consistent with the study of Ogunleye (2023), who found that counselling services significantly enhance students' emotional wellbeing and academic stress management. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Taylor (2020), who argued that counselling services alone may not effectively manage academic stress without supportive academic policies and conducive learning environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that information service, orientation service, and counselling service play significant roles in enhancing academic stress management among undergraduate students. The study revealed that students who have access to relevant information, effective orientation programmes, and professional counselling services are better positioned to cope with academic pressures and adjust positively to university life. Therefore, effective guidance services are essential for promoting emotional stability, academic adjustment, and stress management among undergraduate students.

Implications for Counselling

The findings of this study have significant implications for counselling practice, particularly within the university system. First, the strong relationship between information service and academic stress management suggests that counsellors should provide students with adequate and relevant information concerning academic requirements, examination procedures, study skills, and available support services within the university. Through information dissemination activities such as seminars, workshops, and academic guidance sessions, counsellors can help reduce confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty among undergraduate students.

Second, the moderate relationship between orientation service and academic stress management highlights the importance of orientation programmes in promoting students' adjustment to university life. Counsellors should therefore collaborate with university administrators in organising effective orientation programmes that expose students to academic expectations, campus facilities, time management skills, and stress coping strategies. This may help students adjust more easily to the university environment and manage academic challenges effectively.

More so, the very strong relationship between counselling services and academic stress management underscores the importance of professional

counselling in helping students cope with emotional and academic pressures. Counsellors should provide individual and group counselling services aimed at helping students develop self-confidence, emotional stability, problem-solving abilities, and effective stress management techniques. Counselling interventions such as cognitive restructuring, relaxation training, and emotional support programmes may assist students in managing academic stress and improving their overall wellbeing.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- i. The management of the University of Uyo should strengthen information services by ensuring that students have regular access to accurate and timely academic, social, and career-related information that can help reduce uncertainty and academic stress.
- ii. University authorities should organise comprehensive orientation programmes for newly admitted and returning students to help them understand university regulations, academic expectations, and effective coping strategies for managing academic stress.
- iii. Professional counselling services should be expanded and adequately funded within the University of Uyo to enable counsellors to provide effective emotional support, stress management training, and guidance to undergraduate students experiencing academic difficulties.

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